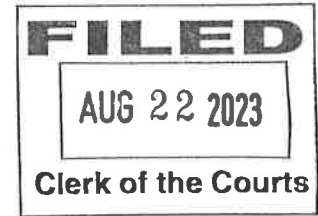


**BEFORE THE SUPREME COURT COMMITTEE ON PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT  
PANEL D**

IN RE: Maurice L. Taggart, Respondent Attorney  
Arkansas Bar No. 2021042  
Case No. CPC-2023-015



**FINDINGS AND ORDER**

The formal charges of misconduct upon which this Findings and Order is based arose from information provided to the Committee by Lon Denton (Denton) against Maurice L. Taggart, an attorney licensed by the Supreme Court of Arkansas assigned Arkansas Bar No. 2021042.

Denton owned a shop in Pine Bluff for decades, and over the course of a few months in 2022, five (5) cars were towed by a towing company and sold for scrap metal. Denton located the names of the towing companies and the scrap yards where the cars were taken. No one had permission to tow or scrap Denton's cars.

Denton consulted with Taggart and executed a contract on July 11, 2022, for "Lawsuit: Recovery of Vehicles", and paid Taggart \$1,837.50. The fee included a flat fee for legal services, filing fee, and service fee.

Denton could not get in touch with Taggart by phone or in person. If he were able to leave a message with Taggart's staff by phone, or in person, he never got a return call from Taggart. Taggart's unresponsiveness went on for seven (7) months and continued beyond Denton filing his grievance with OPC.

On February 23, 2023, Denton filed a small claims case in the District Court of Pine Bluff. Taggart was served with the Complaint, failed to respond, and a default judgment was entered on April 11, 2023, finding that Taggart was indebted to Denton for \$1,942.50. Taggart has not satisfied the judgment.

On March 17, 2023, OPC contacted Taggart during its investigation of Denton's grievance and requested a response by April 3, 2023. On March 18, 2023, and March 28, 2023, Taggart acknowledged

OPC's request and promised a response. He also told Executive Director Lisa Ballard over the phone that he would respond by the deadline. Taggart never provided a response to OPC.

Upon consideration of the formal complaint and attached exhibit materials and the Arkansas Rules of Professional Conduct, Panel D of the Arkansas Supreme Court Committee on Professional Conduct finds:

1. That Taggart's conduct violated Rule 1.3 when he failed to take any action on Denton's matter. Despite attempts by Denton, OPC, and the small claims court, Taggart refused to communicate with Denton. This abandonment is both a lack of diligence and promptness and undermines confidence in the lawyer's trustworthiness. Arkansas Rule 1.3 requires that a lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.
2. That Taggart's conduct violated Rule 1.4(a)(4) when he did not comply with Denton's requests for information. Denton was not afforded a single chance to speak with Taggart after Taggart was paid. There is no excuse for Denton's phone calls and in person office visits going unreturned and unacknowledged by Taggart. Taggart failed to contact Denton after learning that OPC was investigating Denton's matter, showing a total disregard for his obligation and remediation of the issue. A lawyer should promptly respond to or acknowledge client communications. Arkansas Rule 1.4(a)(4) provides that a lawyer shall promptly comply with reasonable requests for information.
3. That Taggart's conduct violated Rule 8.1(b) when he failed to respond to The Office of Professional Conduct. On March 17, 2023, OPC requested that Taggart provide a response to Denton's allegations by April 3, 2023. Taggart acknowledged the request two times by email and also spoke to Director Lisa Ballard over the phone prior to the deadline and told her that he would respond. Taggart never responded. Arkansas Rule 8.1(b) provides that a lawyer, in connection with a disciplinary matter, shall not knowingly fail to respond to a lawful demand for information from an admissions or disciplinary authority.

4. That Taggart's conduct violated Rule 8.4(c) when he engaged in dishonesty and misrepresentation. It was dishonest for Taggart to take Denton's money and provide nothing in return. Taggart could not even be compelled by a judgment against him to right his wrongs with Denton. Denton's extensive measures for communication and his small claims case show the vast difference in what Taggart represented the case would look like, and what actually occurred. Moreover, it was dishonest for Taggart to promise OPC a response, but never provide one. Arkansas Rule 8.4(c) provides that it is professional misconduct for a lawyer to engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation.

WHEREFORE, it is the decision and order of the Arkansas Supreme Court Committee on Professional Conduct, acting through its authorized Panel D, to **INITIATE DISBARMENT** against Maurice Taggart, Arkansas Bar Number 2021042, for his conduct in this matter. Taggart shall pay restitution in the amount of \$1,837.00 and pay a cost of \$150.00.

The restitution and costs assessed herein shall be payable by cashier's check or money order payable to the "Clerk, Arkansas Supreme Court" delivered to the Office of Professional Conduct within thirty (30) days of the date this Findings and Order is filed of record with the Clerk of the Arkansas Supreme Court.

IT IS SO ORDERED

ARKANSAS SUPREME COURT  
COMMITTEE ON PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

By: 

Paul W. Keith, Chair, Panel D

Date: August 22, 2023